

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 000534

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/14/2015

TAGS: PREL EAID EZ IZ IS

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON CZECH DIPLOMATIC AND RECONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY IN IRAQ

Classified By: Political Officer Kim Krhounek for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).).

¶1. (C) Summary. On April 14, we met with Ivo Silhavy, Director of the Middle East Department at the MFA, to discuss the latest developments in Iraq. Silhavy described Czech-Iraqi relations as "very good and very intense," building on prior contacts with the Iraqi Minister of Culture and new Iraqi President Jalal Talabani. The MFA remains committed to Iraqi reconstruction and has allocated their entire 200 million Czech crown (approximately \$8.7 US Dols) Iraqi reconstruction budget; a fund that they successfully protected from attempts to raid it after the tsunami disaster in Southeast Asia. In addition, a separate "transformation assistance" fund will continue to offer pilot programs assisting Iraqi NGO's from 2005-08. The Czech Embassy in Baghdad continues to operate with minimal staff until Czech security services monitoring the security situation allow them to return to normal staffing levels. The current Czech Charge d'Affaires in Baghdad is slated to return home this summer after two years in Iraq; his replacement is not yet known. End summary.

¶2. (C) The Czechs have maintained their Iraqi foreign policy focus through a difficult period in which other Ministries attempted to raid their Iraq reconstruction budget after the tsunami disasters in Asia, and the nearly two months of

SIPDIS

intragovernmental squabbling among coalition members that caused the resignation of FM Svoboda on March 31. Silhavy believes that the Czech commitment to Iraq will remain intact, no matter who takes over the head of the MFA in the weeks or months to come. The Czechs are maintaining close ties with the current Iraqi government through the Iraqi Minister of Culture, Mufid Mohammed Jawad al-Jazairi (who worked for Czechoslovak radio in the 1960's and 70's and has a Czech wife), and now the newly appointed President Jalal Talabani. Talabani was hosted by the GOCR on a visit in June 2004 as the Czechs had foreseen he would play an important role in the new Iraqi government. Talabani also met with former President Vaclav Havel in the early 1990's in his role as a opponent to the regime of Saddam Hussein.

¶3. (C) The MFA is drawing from two separate funds to provide assistance in Iraq; one is a 200 million Czech crown (\$8.7 million US dols) fund specifically designated for Iraqi reconstruction, and the second is part of a more general "transformation assistance" fund that is administered by a special office in the MFA. Out of these funds, the GOCR has participated in a variety of feasibility studies and projects of reconstruction in Iraq including: training of Iraqi police in Jordan, and Iraqi diplomats and judges in Prague, transformation of civil society projects and protection of Iraqi cultural heritage (restoration of manuscripts in the National Library of Baghdad), provision of equipment for the Police Academy at Az Zubayr and specialized training programs for experts in various fields. The funds available in the Iraqi reconstruction budget have been completely allocated; future projects will depend on whether it receives a fresh infusion from the state budget. The Transformation Assistance office however, has an permanent budget and current and future projects, such as the project for NGO training in Iraq which is funded from its budget, will continue into at least 2008.

¶4. (C) Silhavy noted that the Czech Embassy in Baghdad is still short-staffed; there are only two other diplomatic personnel there besides the Charge. The MFA is working with its security services to determine when the security situation in Baghdad will allow for additional personnel to return. The Current Charge d'Affaires, Martin Klepetko, who has been in Baghdad for the past two years, is scheduled to return to Prague this summer. His replacement has not yet been determined.

¶5. (C) Septel will report recent MOD discussions on possibilities for extending Czech Military Police trainers currently in Iraq.

¶6. (C) Silhavy also gave us a quick readout of his recent trip to Israel which was organized by the American Jewish Committee. This trip was the first-ever AJC sponsored group of Central European policy-makers to Israel, and the group

included a mixed group of technocrats and policy-makers (including Members of Parliament). The 10-day trip was conducted as an intensive seminar and included access to Israel's top officials including the Prime Minister, members of the MFA and representatives of NGO's. Silhavy praised the trip as a great success in educating Central Europeans about Israel and the Middle East. It was particularly valuable for the Czechs, as they are currently serving as the NATO contact Embassy for Israel.

Visit Prague's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/prague/index.cfm>
HILLAS